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ROBERT EDWARD LEE

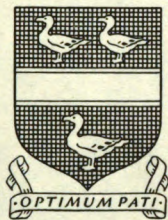
AN ADDRESS

BY

ARCHER ANDERSON.

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THE
EDWARD SHELDON
MEMORIAL COLLECTION



Presented to the
Harvard College Library
by his mother
Mrs. Theodore Sheldon



ROBERT EDWARD LEE.

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT THE

Dedication of the Monument

TO

GENERAL ROBERT EDWARD LEE

AT

RICHMOND, VIRGINIA,

MAY 29, 1890,

BY

ARCHER ANDERSON.

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ADDRESS.

FELLOW CITIZENS,—

A people carves its own image in the monuments of its great men. Not Virginians only, not only those who dwell in the fair land stretching from the Potomac to the Rio Grande, but all who bear the American name may proudly consent that posterity shall judge them by the structure, which we are here to dedicate and crown with a heroic figure. For, as the Latin poet said that, wherever the Roman name and sway extended, *there* should be the sepulchre of Pompey, so to-day, in every part of America, the character and fame of Robert Edward Lee are treasured as a "possession for all time."

And, if this be true of that great name, what shall be said of the circumstances which surround us on this day of solemn commemoration?

That at the end of the first quarter of a century after the close of a stupendous civil war, in which more than a million men struggled for the mastery during four years of fierce and bloody conflict, we should see the Southern States in complete possession of their local self-government, the Federal Constitution unchanged save as respects the great issues sub-

mitted to the arbitrament of war, and the defeated party—whilst in full and patriotic sympathy with all the present grandeur and imperial promise of a reunited country—still not held to renounce any glorious memory, but free to heap honors upon their trusted leaders, living or dead—all this reveals a character in which the American people may well be content to be handed down to history.

All this, and more, will be the testimony of the solid fabric we here complete. It will recall the generous initiative and the unflagging zeal of those noble women of the South to whom in large measure we owe this auspicious day; it will bear its lasting witness as the voluntary offering of the people, not the governments of the Southern States; and, standing as a perpetual memorial of our great leader, it will stand not less as an enduring record of what his fellow-citizens deemed most worthy to be honored.

What kind of greatness, then—it may be fitting on this spot to ask—what kind of greatness should men most honor in their fellow-men? Vast and varied is the circle of human excellence—where is our paramount allegiance due?

In that “temple of silence and reconciliation,” that Westminster Abbey of Florence, whither so many paths of glory led, you may read one answer to this question on the cenotaph of Dante in the inscription: “Honor the sublime poet.” These words the medi-

æval poet himself applied to his great master, Virgil. After near six centuries they still touch some of the deepest feelings of the heart. And with them come crowding on the mind memories of a long line of poets, artists, historians, orators, thinkers who have sounded all the depths of speculation, princes of science who have advanced the frontiers of ordered knowledge, of the least of whom it may be said—as Newton's gravestone records of the greatest—that he was an honor to the race of men. Yes, if our life were only thought and emotion, if will and action and courage did not make up its greatest part, men might justly reverence the genius of poets and thinkers above all other greatness. But strong and natural as is the inclination of those given up to the intellectual life thus to exalt the triumphs of the imagination and the reason, such is not the impulse of the great heart of the multitude. And the multitude is right. In a large and true sense conduct is more than intellect, more than art or eloquence—to have done great things is nobler than to have thought or expressed them.

Thus, in every land, the most conspicuous monuments commemorate the great actors, not the great thinkers of the world's history; and among these men of action, the great soldier has always secured the first place in the affections of his countrymen. What means this universal outburst of the love and

admiration of our race for men who have been foremost in war? Is the common sense of mankind blinded by the blaze of military glory? Or does some deep instinct teach us that the character of the ideal commander is the grandest manifestation in which man can show himself to man? The power and the fascination of this ideal are attested by the indulgent admiration we bestow on men who, on the one side, grandly fill it out, while, on the other, falling grievously below it, weighed down by something base and earthly. Thus, standing before that marvellous monument in Berlin from which Frederick "in his habit as he lived" looks down in homely greeting to his Prussian people, and seems still to warn them that the art which won empire can alone maintain it, we forget the selfish ambition, the petty foibles, the chilling life—we remember only the valor, the consummate skill, the superhuman constancy of the hero-king. Or if, turning from a career so crowned with final triumph, we recall how, for lack of a like commander, France in our own day has been trampled under foot, we may conceive the devotion with which Frenchmen still crowd about the tomb of Napoleon—a name that, in spite of all its lurid associations, in spite of all the humiliations of the Second Empire, has still had power to lift the French nation, during these latter years, from abasement and despair.

Surely there must be something superhuman in the

genius of a great commander, if it can make us forgetful of the woes and crimes so often attending it. How freely, then, may we lavish our admiration and gratitude, when no allowance has to be made for human weakness, when we find military greatness allied with the noblest public and private virtue! Here, at last, in this ideal union is that rare greatness which men may most honor in their fellow-men.

It is the singular felicity of this Commonwealth of Virginia to have produced two such stainless captains. The fame of the one, consecrated by a century of universal reverence and the growth of a colossal empire, the result of his heroic labors, has been commemorated in this city by a monument, in whose majestic presence no man ever received the suggestion of a thought that did not exalt humanity. The fame of the other, not yet a generation old and won in a cause that was lost, is already established by that impartial judgment of foreign nations, which anticipates the verdict of the next age, upon an equal pinnacle, and millions of our countrymen, present here with us in their thoughts and echoing back from city and plain and mountain top the deep and reverent voice of this vast multitude, will this day confirm our solemn declaration that the monument to George Washington has found its only fitting complement and companion in a monument to Robert Lee.

I ventured to say that, if we take account of human

nature in all its complexity, the character of the ideal commander is the grandest manifestation in which man can show himself to man. Consider some of the necessary elements of this great character. And let us begin with its humbler virtues, its more lowly labors. If we take the commander merely on his administrative side, what treasures of energy, forecast, and watchfulness do we not see him expending in the prosaic work of providing the means of subsistence for his army! He is always confronted on a vast scale with man's elemental and primitive want—his daily bread. The matter is so vital that he can never commit it entirely to the staff. The control of the whole subject must be ever in his own grasp.

Then, he must have not only an intimate knowledge of the geography and resources of the theatre of war as maps and books give them, but an instinct for topography and an unerring faculty for finding the way by night or day through forest and field, usually to be met with only in men who pass their whole lives in the open air. To this add a complete acquaintance with all parts of army work and organization—a very genius for detail, an artilleryman's eye for distance, and an engineer's judgment and inventiveness, with a wide and critical comprehension of all the great campaigns of history. But he must possess a still higher knowledge. He must know human nature, he must be wise in his judgment and

selection of his own agents, and especially must he be skilled to read his adversary's mind and character. Upon this varied and profound knowledge will depend the success of those large plans embracing the whole theatre of war which soldiers call strategy.

Now, combine all these elements, conceive of them as expanded into genius, and you may form some idea of the merely intellectual equipment of a great commander. But he might have all this and be fit only to be a chief of staff.

The business of war is with men ; the business of a general is to lead men in that most wonderful of human organizations, an army—on that dread arena, the field of battle. And now come into play the qualities of heart and soul. Consecrated to his high office, a general ought to be morally the best, the most just, the most generous, the most patriotic man among his countrymen. He must not only be their greatest leader—he must know how to make every man in his army believe him to be their greatest leader. And mere belief is not enough. There must be in him a power to call forth an enthusiastic and passionate devotion. Of all careers a military life makes the heaviest demand on the self-effacement and self-sacrifice of those who are to follow and obey. Love and enthusiasm for a leader are the only forces powerful enough to raise men to this heroic pitch. Without them an army is a mob, or at most a spirit-

less machine. With them it becomes capable of the sublimest exhibitions of valor and devotion.

But, essential as is this magnetic power in the leader to draw all hearts, to quiet jealousies, to compel obedience, and to fuse the thoughts and passions of thousands of individual men into a single mass of martial ardor, all these gifts may be present and the true commander absent. Politicians have had these gifts, soldiers even have had these gifts, and utterly failed in the command of armies. To all these rich endowments there must be added an imperturbable moral courage equal to any burden or buffet of fortune, and physical intrepidity in its highest and grandest forms—not only the valor which carries a division commander under orders with overmastering rush to some desperate assault, like Cleburne's at Franklin, or makes him stand immovable as a stone wall, as Bee saw Jackson at Manassas, but an aggressive and unresting ardor to fall on the enemy, like that which burned in Nelson, when he wrote: "I will fight them the moment I can reach their fleet, be they at anchor or under sail—I will not lose one moment in fighting the French fleet—I mean to follow them if they go to the Black Sea—not a moment shall be lost in pursuing the enemy. * * * I will not lose a moment in bringing them to action."

With this fierce passion for fight, the general must unite the self-control, which will refuse battle or calmly

await attack, and, not least, the fortitude which can endure defeat. For weeks and months he must be ready at any moment of the day or night to draw on these vast resources without ever showing weakness under the protracted strain. And over and above all there must preside some God-like power, which, in the crisis of strategy or the storm of battle, not only preserves to the commander all these high faculties, but actually intensifies and expands them. In those irrevocable moments, when the decision of an instant may determine the destiny of States, mere talents must spring into genius, and mind and outward eye send flashes of intuition through the smoke of battle and the dark curtain on which the enemy's movements are to be read only in fitful shadows. In that hour of doom, a nation's fate, a people's ransom may be staked on one man's greatness of soul.

It is the recognition in Lee of the principal elements of this high ideal—courage, will, energy, insight, authority—the organizing mind with its eagle glance, and the temperament for command broad-based upon fortitude, hopefulness, joy in battle—all exalted by heroic purpose and kindled with the glow of an unconquerable soul; it is, besides and above all, the unique combination in him of moral strength with moral beauty, of all that is great in heroic action with all that is good in common life, that will make of this

pile of stone a sacred shrine, dear throughout coming ages, not to soldiers only, but to all

“Helpers and friends of mankind.”

Let a brief recital show that these are words of truth and soberness.

Lee was fortunate in his birth, for he sprang from a race of men who had just shown, in a world-famous struggle, all of the virtues and few of the faults of a class selected to rule because fittest to rule. His father had won a brilliant fame as a cavalry leader, and the signal honor of the warm friendship of Washington. The death of “Light-Horse” Harry Lee when Robert Lee was only eleven years old made the boy the protector of his mother—a school of virtue not unfitted to develop a character that nature had formed for honor. It was partly, no doubt, the example of his father’s brilliant service, but mainly the soldier’s blood which flowed in his veins, that impelled him to seek a place in the Military Academy at West Point. He was presented to President Jackson, and we may well believe the story that the old soldier was quickly won by the gallant youth, and willingly secured him to the army. I cannot dwell on his proficiency in the military school, or his early years of useful service in the corps of engineers, though, doubtless, those practical labors had an

important influence upon the future leader of that Army of Northern Virginia, so famous for its

“—looming bastions fringed with fire”—

the creation of the axe and spade.

One auspicious incident of that time I must not pass by—his marriage to the great-granddaughter of Washington's wife. Thus another tie was formed which connected him by daily associations of family and place with Washington's fame and character. He became, in some sort, Washington's direct personal representative. Is it fanciful to suppose that all this had an immediate effect on his nature, so moulded already to match with whatever was great and noble? It may well be believed that Lee made Washington his model of public duty, and, in every important conjuncture of his life, unconsciously, no doubt, but effectively asked himself the question: “How would Washington have acted in this case?”

The greater elements of Lee's character must appear in the story of his later life. Let me try now to give some conception of his noble person, his grace, his social charm, his pure life—of that inborn dignity which with a look could check familiarity or convey rebuke, of that manly beauty and commanding presence, fitted alike to win child or maiden and to awaken in the sternest soldier an expectation and assurance of pre-eminence and distinction. It was

this which drew from a great master of the art of war, whom a beneficent Providence still spares to be a model of every manly and martial virtue to the sons of the youngest soldiers who followed his unstained banner, it was the recollection of the fascination of Lee's manner and person in the days of their early service that drew from General Joseph E. Johnston these words of vivid and loving description: "No other youth or man so united the qualities that win warm friendship and command high respect. For he was full of sympathy and kindness, genial and fond of gay conversation and even of fun * * * while his correctness of demeanor and language and attention to all duties, personal and official, and a dignity as much a part of himself as the elegance of his person, gave him a superiority that every one acknowledged in his heart."

It was this which made Lord Wolseley say of him as he saw him in later years: "I have met many of the great men of my time, but Lee alone impressed me with the feeling that I was in the presence of a man who was cast in a grander mould, and made of different and finer metal than all other men. He is stamped upon my memory as a being apart and superior to all others in every way."

Thus endowed to command the love and respect of every human being that came into his presence, fully equipped in every military art, temperate, pure,

healthful, brave, consciously following duty as his pole star, and all unconsciously burning with ardor to win a soldier's fame, he entered upon that war with Mexico, which was destined to prove a training-ground for the chief leaders in the conflict between the States. There he soon gave proof of great qualities for war.

But I may stay only to mention one incident in which he displayed such rare force of will, such aggressive and untiring enterprise as at once marked him out for high command. It was just before the battle of Contreras. Scott had learned through Lee's reconnoissance that the Mexican position could be attacked in rear by a difficult movement across a pathless and rugged volcanic field called the "Pedregal." A painful march had brought the turning division at nightfall to the decisive point, and Lee was called into council by the division commander. The council sat long. At last, about nine at night, it resolved on Lee's advice upon an attack at dawn. But it was essential that communication should be established with Scott's headquarters. Lee declared his purpose to effect this communication, and through the stormy night, alone and on foot, with enemies on either hand, he pushed his way across that volcanic waste, comparable only in the difficulties it presented to some Alpine glacier rent with yawning chasms. He won his way to Scott by midnight. At daybreak as engineer he guided the front attack led by Twiggs. The

turning column heard their comrades' guns. They fell on the Mexican rear. A brief and bloody resistance served only to heighten the triumph of American skill and valor. The position was won, and Contreras, to the eye of history, prefigures Chancellorsville.

General Scott described this exploit of Lee's as "the greatest feat of physical and moral courage performed by any individual, in his knowledge, pending the campaign." History will record, as Scott himself nobly admitted, that Lee was Scott's right arm in Mexico.

I may not dwell on the round of engineering duties which Lee discharged with exactness and fidelity during the years following the Mexican war. Of more interest is his first actual command of troops, on his appointment as lieutenant-colonel of the famous Second cavalry serving in Texas. This frontier service of three or four years was important in developing his military character, though it may seem an inadequate preparation in the details of command when compared, for instance, with Wellington's long apprenticeship in India. But genius has many schools, and an earnest, observant mind quickly grasps the lessons of practice.

A dark cloud of war was now threatening to burst over a hitherto peaceful country. The routine of frontier administration and Indian police must have

seemed but idle child's play amid the fierce passions of that rising tempest of civil strife. No man who could think could think of anything but the impending danger. And Lee, the son of a leader of the Revolution, closely linked by descent and association with the men who won American independence and made the American Constitution, Lee, inheriting along with the most ardent love of the Union, a paramount loyalty to his native State, now saw himself obliged to make his choice and take his side in an irrepressible conflict. No more painful struggle ever tore the heart of a patriot. He had served the whole country in a gallant army, which commanded all his affection. He, better than most men, knew the great resources of the North and West. He had sojourned and labored in every part of the land, and could appreciate the arguments drawn from its physical characteristics, from its great river systems and mountain ranges for an indissoluble union. He knew Northern men in their homes; he knew the bravery of the Northern soldiers who filled our regular regiments in Mexico. He was above the prejudices and taunts of the day, which belittled Northern virtue and courage. He knew that, with slight external differences, there was a substantial identity of the American race in all the States, North and South. He was equally above the weak and passionate view of slavery as good in itself, into which the fanatical and unconsti-

tutional agitation of the Abolition party had driven many strong minds in the South. He regarded slavery as an evil which the South had inherited and must be left to mitigate and, if possible, extirpate by wise and gradual measures. He, if any man of that time, was capable of weighing with calmness the duty of the hour. With him, the only question then, as at every moment of his spotless life, was to find out which way duty pointed.

Against the urgent solicitations of General Scott, in defiance of the temptations of ambition—for the evidence is complete that the command of the United States army was offered to him—in manifest sacrifice of all his pecuniary interests, he determined that duty bade him side with his beloved Virginia. He laid down his commission, and solemnly declared his purpose never to draw his sword save in behalf of his native State.

And what was that native State to whose defence he henceforth devoted his matchless sword?

It was a Commonwealth older than the Union of the States; it was the first abode of English freedom in the Western World; it was the scene of the earliest organized legislative resistance to the encroachments of the mother country; it was the birthplace of the immortal leader of our Revolutionary armies, and of many of the architects of the Federal Constitution; it was the central seat of that doctrine of State sove-

reignty sanctioned by the great names of Jefferson and Madison ; it was a land rich in every gift of the earth and sky—richer still in its race of men, brave, frugal, pious, loving honor, but fearing God ; it was a land hallowed then by memories of an almost unbroken series of patriotic triumphs, but now, after the wreck and ruin of four years of unsuccessful war, consecrated anew by deeds of heroism and devotion, whose increasing lustre will borrow a brighter radiance from their sombre background of suffering and defeat. And this day and on this spot, with heightened pride and undiminished love, the sons of that Old Dominion may still salute her in the patriot Roman's verse—

*“Salve magna parens frugum, Saturnia tellus,
Magna virum.”*

This was the land that Lee defended.

Accepting the commission of major-general of the forces of Virginia, he soon passed by the necessary and rapid sway of events into the service of the Confederate States. Virginia had become the battleground on which the Confederacy was to win or lose its independence, and Lee could only defend Virginia as a general of the Confederate army.

During the early months of the war he labored unceasingly and with success in the organization of those armies, which stemmed and dashed back the

first flood of invasion. Here his patience, his careful and minute attention to details, his knowledge of men, and particularly of those officers of the old army who espoused the Southern cause, his thorough military preparation, and, more than all else, his conviction that the war would be long and desperate, made him an invaluable counsellor of the Confederate Executive. His co-operation with the more fortunate generals, chosen to lead armies in the field, was zealous and cordial, and he did not murmur when at last, in August, 1861, his turn for active service came in what promised to be a thankless and inauspicious duty.

The Confederate arms had been unfortunate in Northwestern Virginia. Garnett had been overwhelmed and defeated. Loring, with large reinforcements, had not pressed forward to snatch the lost ground from an enemy weakened by great detachments. So Lee was sent to Valley Mountain to combine all the elements of our strength, and by a stroke of daring recover West Virginia. The Confederate President was convinced that he was the leader for such a campaign—the opinion of the army and of the people enthusiastically confirmed his choice.

Lee quickly mastered the problem before him by personal reconnoissances, and laid his plans with skill and vigor. But the attack on Cheat Mountain, which a year later would have been a brilliant success,

ended in failure and mortification. Lee was able to show to the public but one of the high qualities of a great general—magnanimity under disappointment and defeat. His old comrades of the Mexican war knew him; the Confederate President knew him and still believed in him; but the verdict of the general public on Robert Lee in the winter of 1861-62 might have been summed up in the historian's judgment of Galba, who "by common consent would have been deemed fit to command, had he never commanded."

In such a school of patience and self-control was our great leader destined to pass the first fourteen months of the war.

The first day of "Seven Pines" had been fought, the fierce temper and stern valor of the Army of Northern Virginia had been established, a brilliant success had been won on our right by Longstreet and D. H. Hill, and General Johnston, about night-fall, was arranging a vigorous and combined attack for the morrow. At that moment, Johnston, whose body was already covered with honorable scars, was stricken down by two severe wounds, and the army was deprived of its leader.

On the afternoon of the next day, about five miles below Richmond, Lee assumed command of that army called of Northern Virginia, but fitly representing the valor and the virtue of every Southern State, that army which henceforth was to be the inseparable partner of his fame, that army whose heroic toils,

marches, battles would still, if every friendly record perished, be emblazoned for the admiration of future ages in its adversary's recital of the blood and treasure expended to destroy it. So we are able now to measure Hannibal's greatness only by the magnitude of Rome's sacrifices and devotion.

At any period of the war the loss of Richmond would probably have been fatal to the Confederacy. This truth is the key to the campaigns of the Army of Northern Virginia. It will explain and justify in Lee's conduct many apparent violations of sound principles of war. Ordinarily, nothing is more fatal than to make the fortunes of an army turn on the defence of a position. This was Pemberton's error at Vicksburg—it was Osman's at Plevna. But the political importance of Richmond as the capital of a great State and of the Confederacy, its real strategic advantages as the nucleus of a railway system and other communications, embracing Virginia and the States to the South and West, and still more, the startling fact that its manufacturing establishments, though poor and inadequate, were at first absolutely, and always practically, the sole resource of the South for artillery and railway material—these considerations, in their combined strength, brought about, in the minds of those directing the Confederate government, a conviction of the indispensable necessity of Richmond to the life of the Southern cause.

Washington talked of retreating, in the last resort,

to the mountains of West Augusta, and there maintaining an undying resistance to the British invaders. It is possible that such a guerilla warfare might have succeeded a hundred years ago against an enemy coming across the Atlantic, before the use of steam on sea and river and railway, and before even turnpikes connected the coast with the mountains. It is possible. But the probability is that, as in other contests, the end of organized regular warfare would have been the virtual end of the struggle. How much more must this have been the case in our recent war, when military armaments had already become complex and artificial! Modern armies, with their elaborate small arms, artillery, and ammunition, cannot be maintained without great mechanical appliances. They cannot even be fed without great lines of railway. And how can railways be utilized in a country closely blockaded without these same manufacturing resources?

All this was true from 1861 to 1865. At no time during that period did there exist, south of Richmond, foundries and rolling-mills, capable, in a year's work, of supplying the Confederate armies and railways for three months. In the first part of the war, the nucleus of such establishments could not be found elsewhere in the South. In the latter part, beginnings had been made, but the new production of cannon and railway material never became adequate to the demands of a

campaign: If the requisite machinery could have been improvised, the product could not have been hastily increased, because of the absolute lack of skilled workmen. The loss of the skilled artisans of Richmond would have been as fatal, in our poverty, as the loss of its mills and workshops.

The defence of Richmond, then, was the superhuman task to which Lee now found himself committed by the policy of the Confederate Government, and by the pressure of conditions, independent of his will or control.

How precious for us Virginians is this intimate association of his immortal labors with this city of our affections--for more than a century the centre of our State life, for four years of heroic struggle the inviolate citadel of a people in arms! The familiar objects about us are memorials of him; the streets which his feet have trodden, the church where he worshipped, the modest dwelling which sheltered those nearest his heart, the heights overlooking river and land which make up the military topography he had so deeply studied, and the graves of that silent army by which our city is still begirt. You can hardly prolong your evening walk without coming upon fields, once like any others, but now touched with that mysterious meaning which speaks from every spot where for home and kindred men have fought and died.

Thus, at the critical moment when a trifling advance of McClellan's forces would have begun a siege of Richmond, Lee took command of the army marshalled for its defence. His first step was to overrule opinions tending to a retirement of our line. His next was to fortify that line, and to summon to his aid, for a great aggressive effort, all the forces that could be spared in Virginia, Georgia, and the Carolinas. In his comprehensive plan for the great day of battle now at hand was embraced that small but heroic band with which Jackson had just defeated three armies, filled the Federal capital with alarm, and diverted from McClellan McDowell's powerful reinforcement.

The secrecy in which Lee knew how to wrap this movement was itself a presage of generalship. He not only concealed Jackson's rapid march, so that Shields and McDowell should not follow on his heels, but, by an actual movement by rail of Whiting's division to Charlottesville, he made McClellan believe that he was sending a strong detachment to the Valley. Then, with an army still inferior to its adversary by at least one-fourth, he burst upon McClellan's right wing. By Lee's wise and bold combinations, the weaker army showed, at the point of attack, double the strength of the stronger. The Federal general saw his communications snatched from his control, his right wing, after an obstinate and bloody

conflict, broken and put to flight, his whole army turning its back upon the goal of the campaign, and fighting now, as men fight on issues of life and death—not for Richmond—but for safety and a refuge-place under the guns of the fleet.

I need not recall the valor, the sacrifices, the chequered fortunes, or the visible trophies of those seven days of heroic struggle. Whatever criticism may be passed upon the details of the several actions, the broad fact remains that, as their direct result, that moral ascendancy, which is the real genius of victory, forsook the Federal and passed over to the Confederate camp. And Lee rose up, in the minds of friend and foe, to the full stature of a great and daring leader.

An act of vigor quickly showed how correctly he estimated the staggering effect of the mighty blow he had dealt. He hurried Jackson to Gordonsville to meet Pope's threatening force, and soon he dispatched A. P. Hill's division on the same service. Jackson's fierce attack on Banks at Cedar Mountain at once caused new alarm for Washington. A rapid weakening of McClellan's force was the result. Reading this with that intuitive perception of what is passing behind the enemy's lines, which henceforth marks him as fit to command, Lee recognizes that the initiative is now in his hands, and presently moves with nearly his whole army to the line of the Rapidan. His design is by celerity and vigor to counterbalance the enor-

mous preponderance of his enemies. He means to fall upon Pope before McClellan's army can join him. You know the splendid boldness of Jackson's immortal march to Pope's rear, which Lee approved and ordered. You know how, after prodigies of rapid movement, obstinate fighting, and intrepid guidance, the Army of Northern Virginia stood once more united on the plains of Manassas, and there baffled and crushed an adversary its superior by one-half in numbers. Again the Federal army turned its back upon the goal of the campaign, again the Federal army bent its march—not to its commander's, but to Lee's imperious will. The invasion of Maryland, the capture of Harper's Ferry attested it, and Lee's victorious sweep was only checked by one of those unlucky accidents inseparable from war. His order for the combined movements of his troops fell into McClellan's hands when the ink upon it was scarcely dry.

This precipitated the great battle of Sharpsburg.

On that sanguinary field 40,000 Confederates finally repulsed every attack of an army of 87,000 Federal soldiers. On the day following the battle they grimly stood in their long, thin lines, inviting the assault which, as history will record, was not delivered.

If ever commander was tried by overwhelming and continuous peril, and rose superior to it, and tri-

umphed by sheer moral power over force and fortune, Lee on those two fateful days gave that supreme proof of a greatness of soul as much above depression under reverses as elation in success. In such moments the army feel the lofty genius of their leader. They acknowledge his royal right to command. They recognize their proud privilege to follow and obey. To such leaders only is it given to form heroic soldiers. Such were the ragged, half-starved men in gray who stood with Lee at Sharpsburg.

It is a vision of some such moment, perhaps, that our sculptor, Mercié, has caught with the eye of genius, and fixed in imperishable bronze. The General has ridden up, it seems to me, in some pause of battle, to the swelling crest of the front line, and, while the eyes of his soldiers are fastened on him in keen expectancy, but unwavering trust, the great leader—silent and alone with his dread responsibility—is scanning, with calm and penetrating glance, the shifting phases and chances of the stricken field. Such is the commanding figure which will presently be unveiled to your view, and dull, indeed, must be the imagination that does not henceforth people this plain with invisible hosts, and compass Lee about—now and forever—with the love and devotion of embattled ranks of heroic men in gray.

But the campaign of 1862 was yet to close in a dramatic scene of unequalled grandeur.

As in some colossal amphitheatre, Lee's soldiers stood ranked on the bold hills encircling Fredericksburg to witness the deployment on the plain beneath, with glittering bayonets and banners and every martial pomp, of Burnside's splendid army. A gorgeous spectacle was spread out under their feet. It was hard to realize that such a pageant was the prelude to bloody battle. But the roar of a hundred great guns from the Stafford heights quickly dispelled any illusion, and the youngest recruit could see and applaud the marvellous skill with which the Confederate commander, so recently baffled in his plan of invasion, was now interposing a proud and confident army across the latest-discovered road to Richmond. At the opportune moment, Lee's line of twenty-five miles contracted to five, and 78,000 Confederates calmly awaited the assault of 113,000 Federal soldiers. That assault was delivered. On rushed line after line of undaunted Northern soldiers. Braver men never marched more boldly to the cannon's mouth. But their valor was unavailing. As Stonewall Jackson said, his men sometimes failed to carry a position, but never to hold one. The most determined courage and a carnage, appalling from its concentration, served only to mark the heroism of the Northern soldier. But the prize of victory remained with Lee. At one blow the Federal invasion was paralyzed, and for months and months the great

Northern host lay torpid in the mud and snow of a Virginian winter.

The repose of that winter strengthened the Federal army, but weakened Lee's, for he had been obliged to detach Longstreet with two divisions to Southeastern Virginia. Hence the last days of April, 1863, found Lee confronting Hooker's army of 131,000 men with only 57,000 Confederates.

If I mention these respective numbers so often, it is because they constitute the indestructible basis of Lee's military fame. You will search in vain in history for a parallel to such uniform, excessive, and prolonged disparity in numbers, such amazing inferiority in all the material and appliances of war, crowned by such a succession of brilliant, though dearly-bought victories. If these considerations in themselves establish Lee's fame, they also vindicate it from the only criticism to which it has been subjected. They justify and explain the comparatively indecisive character of those victories. When the odds are four to five, three to five, three to seven, when every man has fought, and there are no reserves, the victories of the weaker army must of their very nature fail to destroy an adversary of the same proud race, of equal, if of different valor.

The events we now approach present Lee in every phase of the consummate commander. Can you imagine an attitude of grander firmness than that in

which we see him on Hooker's crossing the Rappahannock? There was a letter from him to the Confederate Secretary of War, written at that moment, which showed him in this mood of heroic calm, waiting for the development of the enemy's purpose, determined to fight, but giving no hint of that tremendous lion-spring at Chancellorsville, which was to pluck out the very heart of the Federal invasion.

The plan of that great battle, as happens with many master-works, was struck out at a single blow, in a brief conference with Jackson, on the evening of the 1st of May.

An eye-witness has depicted the scene—the solemn forest, the rude bivouac, the grave and courteous commander, heir of all the knightly graces of the cavaliers, the silent, stern lieutenant, with the faith and the fire of Cromwell, the brief interchange of question and answer, the swiftly following order for the movement of the morrow.

The facts of the enemy's position and the surrounding topography had just been ascertained. The genius of the commander, justly weighing the character of his adversary, the nature of the country, and the priceless gift in his own hands of such a thunder-bolt of war, such a Titanic force as Jackson, instantly devised that immortal flank march which will emblazon Chancellorsville on the same roll of deathless fame with Blenheim, with Leuthen, with Austerlitz, and Jena.

The battle of Chancellorsville will rank with the model battles of history. It displayed Lee in every character of military greatness. Nothing could exceed the sublime intrepidity with which, leaving Early to dispute the heights of Fredericksburg against Sedgwick's imposing force, he himself led five weak divisions to confront Hooker's mighty host. Lee meant to fight, but not in the dark. He meant first to look his adversary in the eye. He meant to see himself how to aim his blow. Where shall we find a match for the vigor, the swiftness, the audacity of that flank march assigned to Jackson—for the fierce and determined front attack led by Lee himself? There is nothing equal to it save only Frederick's immortal stroke of daring on the Austrian flank at Leuthen. But the second day brings out the strongest and grandest lines of the Confederate commander's heroic character. Jackson has been stricken down, Lee's right arm has been torn from him; but, the unconquerable firmness of his nature resisting every suggestion of weakness, and that inborn love of fight, without which no general can be great, blazing out and kindling all it touched, he forces on the fierce attack along the whole line till, in a wild tumult of battle, the Federal army wavers, gives ground, melts away. The advance, if pushed, will drive the enemy in confusion to the river. And Lee is preparing for a combined assault. But a new element now bursts into the action. News is brought from

ten miles away that the Confederates have been driven from the heights of Fredericksburg towards Richmond, and Sedgwick is marching on Lee's rear. Lee's celerity and firmness are equal to the crisis. He promptly hurls four brigades from under his own hand at the head of Sedgwick's column, and with bold countenance hems in Hooker's army of nearly thrice his own numbers. If it were not the sternest tragedy, it might be comedy—this feat of thirty thousand men shutting up eighty thousand. But Hooker has been beaten, the decisive point is not there, as the eye of genius can intuitively see. It is with Sedgwick six miles away, and, realizing in his practice the golden maxim of the schools, Lee is quickly at that point in sufficient, if not superior force. Sedgwick is crushed on the third day, and driven across the river. Lee now concentrates all his force to fall upon Hooker with a final and overwhelming blow. The fifth day breaks, and lo! the Federal army has vanished, not a man of them save the dead, the wounded, and the prisoners remaining on the Richmond side of the Rappahannock.

What was left undone by Lee that genius, constancy, and daring could effect? Will any man say that the Confederate army should have followed its defeated, but colossal adversary across the river? This would have been to invite disaster.

The substantial and astounding fruits of victory

were won in the collapse for that season of the Federal invasion, in the masterly initiative which Lee was now able to seize, in the submissive and tell-tale docility with which Hooker thenceforth followed every motion of the magic wand of the Confederate commander.

The march to the Potomac and the captures by the way renewed the glories of 1862. For a few short weeks Virginia was freed from the tramp of armies. But, as before, the invasion, begun with an intoxicating outburst of martial hope, was doomed to end in a drawn and doubtful battle. After a bloody struggle on the heights of Gettysburg, the two armies stood the greater part of two long summer days defiantly looking into each other's eyes. Neither was willing to attack its adversary. However deeply Lee may have felt the failure of his daring stroke, he took upon himself all the reproach and all the responsibility of the result. No word of criticism or censure passed his lips. But, confident of the devotion and the steadiness of his army, he promptly turned to the duty of the hour. What an example of serenity, of imperturbable firmness! We owe to Gettysburg not only the most thrilling spectacle of the unsurpassed valor of the Confederate soldier, but a matchless exhibition of composure and magnanimity in the Confederate commander. The aggressive campaign failed, but neither the army nor its general was shaken.

We find them during the remainder of 1863 facing their old foe with undiminished spirit. And soon Lee gives proof of equal firmness, enterprise, and generosity in detaching Longstreet's corps to strike a decisive blow, eight hundred miles away, by the side of Bragg at Chickamauga. The annals of war do not exhibit a more unselfish act.

How shall I briefly describe the added titles to enduring fame with which the campaign of the next year, 1864, invested our great leader? Who that lived through that time can forget the awful hush of those calm spring days, which ushered in the tremendous outburst of the Federal attack along a thousand miles of front?

In every quarter, at one and the same moment, the Confederacy felt the furious impact of a whole nation's force driven on by the resistless will of a single commander. Grant's aggressiveness, Grant's stubbornness, Grant's unyielding resolve to destroy the Confederate armies, seemed suddenly to animate every corps, every division, almost every man of the Federal host. Even now we stand aghast at the awful disparity in the numbers and resources of the two armies. Swinton puts the force under Grant's immediate eye on the first day of the campaign at 140,000 men. Grant himself puts it at 116,000. It is certain that Lee had less than 64,000 soldiers of all arms. But, in addition, Grant was directing against

Richmond or its communications 30,000 men under Butler, 17,000 under Sigel and Crook, and a numerous and powerful fleet.

Let me give two examples of the extraordinary means at his disposal. He never went into camp but that, within an hour or two, every division was placed in telegraphic communication with his headquarters. Lee could only reach the several parts of his army by the aid of mounted couriers. But this is the most striking. On four several occasions Grant shifted his base by a simple mandate to Washington to lodge supplies at Fredericksburg, at Port Royal, at the White House, at City Point. Thus, his communications were absolutely invulnerable. With the boundless wealth at his control, he laid under contribution the resources of the commerce and manufactures of the world, and, combining all the agencies of destruction in the vast host under his command, fired now with something of his own smothered, but relentless passion, he hurled it in repeated and bloody assaults at the heart of the Confederacy.

The heart of the Confederacy was the Army of Northern Virginia.

Surely, heroic courage never faced a more tremendous crisis than Lee now met and mastered. Grant had crossed the Rapidan. No idea of retreat entered Lee's mind. He only waited to discover the purpose of the enemy. Then, with fierce energy, he hurled

two corps at the heads of his columns, not even halting for Longstreet to come up.

For two days that awful struggle raged in the dark and gruesome thickets of the Wilderness. Lee could not drive back his stubborn adversary, but he staggered and stunned and foiled him. Any previous commander of the Army of the Potomac would have retreated. Grant sullenly steals off by night to Spotsylvania.

But a lion is there in his path. The road to Richmond is blocked by Lee. Grant's determination to force a passage brings on one of the fiercest and most protracted struggles of the war. For four days out of twelve that raging fire-flood surges about the lines of Spotsylvania. The very forest is consumed by it. How can man withstand its fury? Only by that courage which in its contempt of death is a pre-sage of immortality. On such a field the human spirit rises even in common men to transcendent heights of valor and self-sacrifice, the great soul of the commander moves through the wild chaos like some elemental force, and the terrible majesty of war veils its horrors.

Grant cannot take those lines. The solitary advantage won at the salient by his overwhelming masses does but display on an immortal page the quick resource, the commanding authority, the unconquerable tenacity of the Confederate General. Grant could

not drive him from those lines ; but the commander of a greatly superior army can never find it hard to turn his adversary's position, especially if, by means of a fleet and convenient rivers, he can shift his base as easily as write a dispatch. Yet Lee always divined every turning movement, and always placed his army in time across the path of its adversary.

In the succession of bloody battles ending with the slaughter of Cold Harbor, he everywhere won the substantial fruits as well as the honors of victory, and between the Wilderness and the Chickahominy, in twenty-eight days he inflicted on Grant a loss of 60,000 men—an appalling number, equal to the strength of Lee's own army at the beginning of the campaign.

Try to conceive the intense strain of those twenty-eight days. Jackson is no longer by Lee's side, Longstreet has been stricken down severely wounded on the first day. Suppose a single moment of hesitation in the commander, a single false interpretation of obscure and conflicting appearances, a failure at any hour of the day or night to maintain in their perfect balance all those high faculties which we see united in Lee, and what would have availed the valor of those matchless Confederate soldiers? Can we wonder that they loved him, can we wonder that, like Scipio's veterans, they were ready to die for him, if he would only spare himself? Thrice in this cam-

paign did they give him this supreme proof of personal devotion.

Of the siege of Petersburg I have only time to say that in it for nine months the Confederate commander displayed every art by which genius and courage can make good the lack of numbers and resources. But the increasing misfortunes of the Confederate arms on other theatres of war gradually cut off the supply of men and means. The Army of Northern Virginia ceased to be recruited. It ceased to be adequately fed. It lived for months on less than one-third rations. It was demoralized, not by the enemy in its front, but by the enemy in Georgia and the Carolinas. It dwindled to 35,000 men holding a front of thirty-five miles; but over the enemy it still cast the shadow of its great name. Again and again, by a bold offensive, it arrested the Federal movement to fasten on its communications. At last, an irresistible concentration of forces broke through its long, thin line of battle. Petersburg had to be abandoned. Richmond was evacuated. Trains bearing supplies were intercepted, and a starving army, harassed for seven days by incessant attacks on rear and flank, found itself completely hemmed in by overwhelming masses. Nothing remained to it but its stainless honor, its unbroken courage.

In those last solemn scenes, when strong men, losing all self-control, broke down and sobbed like

children, Lee stood forth as great as in the days of victory and triumph. No disaster crushed his spirit, no extremity of danger ruffled his bearing. In the agony of dissolution now invading that proud army, which for four years had wrested victory from every peril, in that blackness of utter darkness, he preserved the serene lucidity of his mind. He looked the stubborn facts calmly in the face, and, when no military resource remained, when he recognized the impossibility of making another march or fighting another battle, he bowed his head in submission to that Power, which makes and unmakes nations.

The surrender of the fragments of the Army of Northern Virginia closed the imperishable record of his military life.

What a catastrophe! What a moving and pathetic contrast! On the one side, complete and dazzling triumph after a long succession of humiliating disasters; on the other, absolute ruin and defeat—a crown of thorns for that peerless army which hitherto had known only the victor's laurel! But the magnanimity of the conqueror, not less than the fortitude of the vanquished shone out over the solemn scene, and softened its tragic outlines of fate and doom. The moderation and good sense of the Northern people, breathing the large and generous air of our western world, quickly responded to Grant's example, and, though the North was afterwards betrayed into fanati-

cal and baleful excess on more than one great subject, all the fiercer passions of a bloody civil war were rapidly extinguished. There was to be no Poland, no Ireland in America. When the Hollywood pyramid was rising over the Confederate dead soon after the close of the contest, some one suggested for the inscription a classic verse, which may be rendered:

"They died for their country—their country perished with them."

Thus would have spoken the voice of despair.

Far different were the thoughts of Lee. He had drawn his sword in obedience only to the dictates of duty and honor, and, looking back in that moment of utter defeat, he might have exclaimed with Demosthenes: "I say that, if the event had been manifest to the whole world beforehand, not even then ought Athens to have forsaken this course, if Athens had any regard for her glory, or for her past, or for the ages to come." But, facing the duty of the hour, Lee saw now that the question submitted to the arbitrament of war had been finally answered. He recognized that the unity of the American people had been irrevocably established. He felt that it would be impiety and crime to dishonor by the petty strife of faction that pure and unselfish struggle for constitutional rights, which, while a single hope remained, had been loyally fought out by great armies, led by

heroic captains, and sustained by the patriotic sacrifices of a noble and resolute people. He, therefore, promptly counselled his old soldiers to look upon the great country thus reunited by blood and iron as their own, and to live and labor for its honor and welfare. His own conduct was in accord with these teachings. Day by day his example illustrated what his manly words declared: "that human virtue should be equal to human calamity."

For five years he was now permitted to exhibit to his countrymen, in the discharge of the duties of president of Washington College, the best qualities of citizen, sage, and patriot. In Plato's account of the education of a Persian king, four tutors are chosen from among the Persian nobles—one the wisest, another the most just, a third the most temperate, and a fourth the bravest. It was the unique fortune of the students of Washington College to find these four great characters united in one man—their peerless Lee. As the people saw him fulfilling these modest, but noble functions; as they saw him with antique simplicity putting aside every temptation to use his great fame for vulgar gain; as they saw him, in self-respecting contentment with the frugal earnings of his personal labor, refusing every offer of pecuniary assistance; as they realized his unselfish devotion of all that remained of strength and life to the nurture of

the Southern youth in knowledge and morals, a new conviction of his wisdom and virtue gathered force and volume, and spread abroad into all lands.

The failure of the righteous cause for which he fought denied him that eminence of civil station, in which his great qualities in their happy mixture might well have afforded a parallel to the strength and the moderation of Washington. But what failure could obscure that moral perfection which places him as easily by the side of the best men that have ever lived, as his heroic actions make him the peer of the greatest? There are men whose influence on mankind neither worldly success nor worldly failure can affect.

"The greatest gift the hero leaves his race
Is to have been a hero."

This moral perfection, breathing the very spirit of his Christian faith, is no illusive legend of a succeeding generation exaggerating the worth of the past. Our belief in it rests upon the unanimous testimony of the men who lived and acted with him, among whom nothing is more common than the declaration, that Lee was the purest and best man of action whose career history has recorded. In his whole life, laid bare to the gaze of the world, the least friendly criticism has never discovered one single deviation from the narrow path of rectitude and honor.

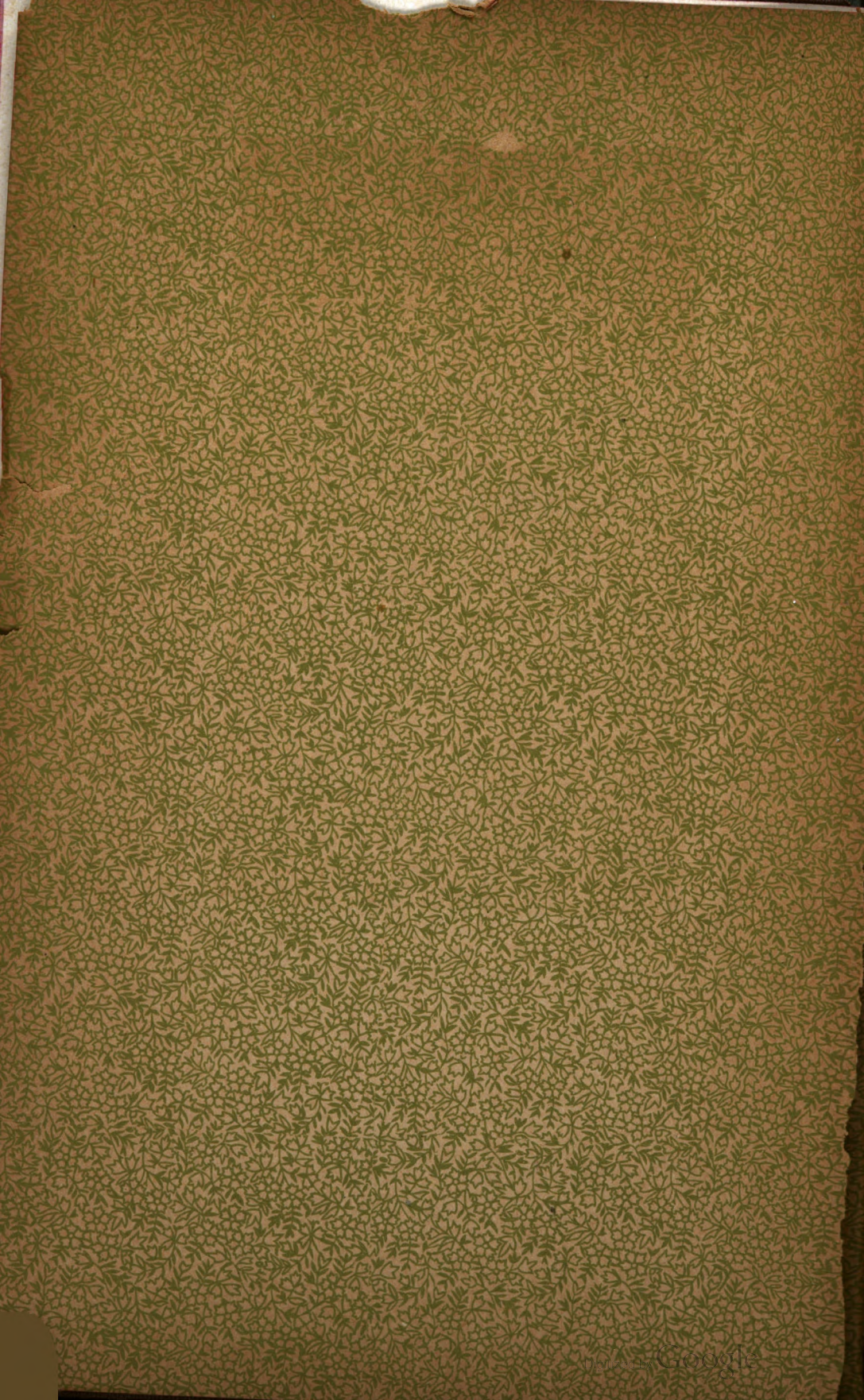
What was strained eulogy when Montesquieu said

of another great soldier—Turenne—that “his life was a hymn in praise of humanity”—is, if applied to Lee, the language of sober truth. No man can consider his life without a feeling of renewed hope and trust in mankind. There is about his exhibitions of moral excellence the same quality of power in reserve that marks him as a soldier. He never failed to come up to the full requirements of any situation, and his conduct communicated the impression that nothing could arise to which he would be found unequal. His every action went straight to the mark without affectation or display. It cost him no visible effort to be good or great. He was not conscious that he was exceptional in either way, and he died in the belief that, as he had been sometimes unjustly blamed, so he had as often been too highly praised.

Such is the holy simplicity of the noblest minds. Such was the pure and lofty man, in whom we see the perfect union of Christian virtue and old Roman manhood. His goodness makes us love his greatness, and the fascination, which this matchless combination exerts, is itself a symptom and a source in us of moral health. As long as our people truly love and venerate him, there will remain in them a principle of good. For all the stupendous wealth and power, which in the last thirty years have lifted these States to foremost rank among the nations of the earth, are less a subject for pride than this one heroic

man—this human product of our country and its institutions.

Let this monument, then, teach to generations yet unborn these lessons of his life! Let it stand, not as a record of civil strife, but as a perpetual protest against whatever is low and sordid in our public and private objects! Let it stand as a memorial of personal honor that never brooked a stain, of knightly valor without thought of self, of far-reaching military genius unsoiled by ambition, of heroic constancy from which no cloud of misfortune could ever hide the path of duty! Let it stand for reproof and censure, if our people shall ever sink below the standards of their fathers! Let it stand for patriotic hope and cheer, if a day of national gloom and disaster shall ever dawn upon our country! Let it stand as the embodiment of a brave and virtuous people's ideal leader! Let it stand as a great public act of thanksgiving and praise, for that it pleased Almighty God to bestow upon these Southern States a man so formed to reflect His attributes of power, majesty, and goodness!





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